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A LETTER TO A FRIEND,

Concerning the

Nature of the *Divine Persons*

IN THE

Holy Trinity.

WITH

Some *Excerptions* out of the Letter of a Friend, as also elsewhere, by way of Postscript, relating to the Main Subject.

Ομονοία *Vox Equa*[illegible] *potius Essentiæ quam* Singularitatem *Signific*[illegible] Petav. de Trin. l. 4. c. 13.

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WHerefore it *seemeth to be unquestionably Evident, that when the Antient Orthodox Fathers of the Christian Church maintain'd against* Arius, *the Son to be* Homoousion, Coessential, *or* Consubstantial *with the Father, though that Word be thus Interpreted,* Of the same Essence or Substance, *yet they Universally understood thereby, not a* Sameness of Singular and Numerical, *but of* Common *or* Universal Essence. Intell. Syst. p. 608.

And again, p. 611. thus. *Wherefore* Athanasius *here disclaimeth a* Monoousian Trinity, *as* Epiphanius *did before a* Tautoousian; *they alike distinguishing them from the* Homoousian Trinity, *as a Trinity of* Real Hypostases *or* Persons, *that have severally their own* Singular Essence, *but agree in one* Common *and* Universal Essence of the Godhead. *From whence it is plain, that the Antient Orthodox Fathers asserted no such thing, as one and the* same Singular *or* Numerical Essence, *of the several* Persons *of the Trinity.* See this at large prov'd in that Learned Writer.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND, Concerning the Holy Trinity.

SIR,

LONG and great have been the Conteſts with reſpect to the Doctrin of the *Holy Trinity* here amongſt our ſelves of late Years; and great Zeal hath been ſhewn, not only from the Common Enemies in the Cauſe, but from ſome of our own Church, one againſt another. To make no further Remarks on this at preſent; the Miſchief and Prepoſterouſneſs of this latter, as it hath been handled: My Buſineſs in this Letter is, after all that I have obſerv'd from any Hand in this Diſpute, to write you my

own Private Senſe, in a ſhort Paper, as to the great Subject of this Controverſy: What is the way that I in my own Mind can draw ſome Apprehenſion of the Bleſſed Trinity; ſuch as anſwers, if admitted, all Difficulties; and in which is nothing, as I can diſcern, of any Abſurdity or Contradiction; nothing Contrary to the Scriptures, nor to the Sentiments, I perſwade my ſelf, take it altogether, of the Antient Church: And is the only way indeed, as to what concerns Reaſon, I can ſatisfy my ſelf by in this Matter.

But if the Church after all, or Governors of it, think it not convenient, that its Members ſhould expreſs themſelves according to their own Private Senſe in this Point, however they be perſwaded of the main Article, and the Uſefulneſs and Reaſonableneſs of their way of holding it: Or if ſhe will not give leave to any ſuch particular Interpretations; but requires her Sons to hold it in the Voice and Words of the *Creed*, and ſuch Terms as have been moſt known and uſed in the Church; and this in order unto Peace, and for the preventing of further Miſchief and Inconvenience in this Controverſy: I ſay, if this be the Will and Mind of our Governors, in ſo peculiar and profound a Myſtery as the preſent, I think we owe ſo much to the juſt Wiſdom and Authority of our Rulers, as that we ought to ſubmit, and obſerve their Orders in this Particular; it being a Matter we are agreed on in the main, and are only forbid, becauſe of the Subject, Private and particular Explications.

This I look upon as but a juſt Deference in ſuch a Matter as this, we owe to Authority; and therefore what I write is only in a Private way to a Friend; and that which I here beforehand retract, ſo far as it ſhall really

really be False or Erroneous, and truly Contradict the Sense of the Church, or Will of my Superiors.

For this most Venerable Part, and Sublime Article of our Christian Faith, I think we have great reason in the general to acknowledge it.

The Form of Baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; the Benediction, pronounced solemnly and peculiarly from these Three; the *Gloria Patri, &c.* as solemnly again used, and early in the Church to these alone. The beginning of St. *John's* Gospel, as also the First Chapter of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*; with other numerous Passages needless here to be mentioned, in the *New Testament*; the many admirable Prophecies, Titles and Characters of Christ in the *Old*; such of both sorts, as the Learned Bishop of *Worcester* hath congested together in his Second Dialogue concerning the Trinity and Transubstantiation; and which in their easy sense naturally Establish the Doctrin of the Trinity; the Worship which is apparently due to Christ, and was as actually paid him both in the Apostles days, and in the After-Church; the Dignity by this means of his Death and Sufferings, with the most gracious Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Height and Force of the whole Dispensation; the prevailing Sense and Doctrin of the Church in all Ages this way; I mean for the Holding of a Blessed Trinity. And however *Arianism* was more gross at first, it soon came to that pitch, as to be exceeding nigh the very Truth it self; and hath been thought by some, in a due sense, reconcilable with it; as afterwards I may further have occasion to shew.

But to proceed: the desirableness moreover, in a way of Reason it self, and on all accounts, there is for the

the Truth of this Doctrin; as taking away that perfect *Solitude* from the Deity, which, as to it self, seems otherwise in it, there being so Infinite a Distance between God and the Creature, even after it was made; and a more absolute Singleness and Solitariness before: The rendring of the Deity by this means both the fuller and perfecter in it self, as also with respect to the enlarg'd Joy, Worship, and Adoration of all the Creatures; as your self hath often very excellently express'd it. The Footsteps and Tradition of this Doctrin amongst *Jews* and *Heathens*, some antient Writings and *Cabbala's* of the one, and some Eminent Sects and Philosophers of the other; as Dr. *More* and Dr. *Cudworth*, with that most Learned Prelate but now mention'd, and divers others, have made out: To say nothing of the Hints and Corruptions of it, amongst several of the antient Heathen Fables, as Dr. *Wallis* hath noted on this Subject.

I say, lay all these together, and they seem to me, especially the plainest and chiefest of them, to lay abound-dant Foundation for the Mystery of the Trinity; and that a Man fairly can no way come off from the force of them. And, as a further Confirmation, we may well add the Force and Violence, the Difficulties and Absurdities which *Socinianism* in particular, after all its pretences, is incumbred with, as hath abundantly been shewn by our Excellent Writers.

Having declar'd therefore thus my General Sense touching this so Deep and Venerable Mystery, with the Grounds of it, I shall now as briefly and freely lay before you my manner of holding it, or the Sense and Apprehension which from some Hands I have concerning it; and without which I know not how to satisfy

ſatisfy my Reaſon or Cogitation in this Matter.

First then, As there are Three Perſons acknowledged to be in the Holy Godhead, ſo I cannot but conceive that each of theſe Perſons is Subſtance and Spirit; or, to ſpeak plainly our, that each hath a proper Eſſence or Subſtance of his own; though undivided from the reſt of the entire Divine Subſtance. For my part, I can make nothing of a Perſon, without a *Subſtance* or *Eſſence*, to be the Ground of that Perſon; nor I never met yet, after all their Endeavours, with any that could.

But how then ſhall we avoid the dreadful Abſurdity, Blaſphemy and Hereſy, of Three Subſtances, and Three Gods? I confeſs, this is no great Difficulty with me; nor doth the Opinion which I offer at ſeem other than what is neceſſary, one would think, in theſe Caſes.

It is abundantly, I ſay, acknowledg'd, that there are Three Perſons, Three Real and Diſtinct Perſons, tho' but One God. Now in ſuch a Caſe as this, no abſolute or moſt perfect Unity and Simplicity conceivable is, or ought to be ſought for or expected. For here is a peculiar Holy Myſtery of Three Perſons, or Three Divine Beings, as, I hope, I may call them, and thoſe Real and Diſtinct, in One God-head. Where this Glorious therefore and Eternal Godhead can be One but in ſuch a Senſe, and that muſt due and proper, as is Conſiſtent with this *Trinity* of Beings or Perſons in it. We are to take as much Care of the Trinity as of the Unity; and it ſeems therefore to be Unreaſonable altogether to make or expect the Infinite Divine Eſſence of the Godhead as much One, Single and Simple, as if there was no Plurality or Trinity of Perſons contain'd

in

in it: And the Infinite and Eternal One God as much One, as to real Subſtance, as if not Three, and thoſe evident and diſtinct, but One only Perſon, or Perſonality, was contained in his Bleſſed Nature and Being.

Wherefore, to be ſhort, if we can find and conceive as great a Unity in the Divine Nature, as is poſſible or conceivable without deſtroying the Trinity and Diſtinction of Perſons; and ſuch as in its own Nature is abundantly ſufficient, and ſo as properly to make them altogether but One God; and to anſwer that Scripture ſo frequently urged by our Socinian Writers, or any others like it, *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord thy God is one Lord*: Then certainly have we a ſufficient Conception and Explication, ſo far as concerns uſe, of this Myſtery: and I know not any Objections but what are anſwered by it. Now this is that, which I hope plainly to make appear to you and my ſelf; and I ſhall do it in this manner.

I ſuppoſe the Infinite and Eternal Word, or Son of God, whether by the Father's perfect Conceiving and Underſtanding of himſelf from all Eternity; or from the Infinite Fulneſs and Emanatory Fecundity of his Nature in General; or what Particular way I pretend not to determine: But I ſuppoſe, I ſay, the Son ſomeway Generated of the Father, the aſſur'd Root and Fountain of the Deity, from all Eternity; *God of God, Light of Light*, nay Subſtance of Subſtance, and *very God of very God*; but yet no way ſeparated or divided from him; but infinitely on the contrary conjoined in Union and Subſtance to him; not only in Will and Nature, and by an abſolute mutual Conſciouſneſs and Power, but in very Eſſence and Subſtance; Light to Light, Glory to Glory, Subſtance to Subſtance: So

that

that, as it follows in the Creed, He may properly be ſaid to be *of one Subſtance with the Father :* Not, in the ſenſe of many, of the ſame abſolutely ſingle and *Numerical* Subſtance of the Father; as if the Father's Numerical Subſtance was his; but each hath a proper Subſtance of his own, yet wholly united, and altogether undivided from one another; ſo that in a proper ſenſe they are not Two, but One Subſtance.

Let us proceed now to the Holy Ghoſt; after having given alſo briefly an Account of which, we ſhall come more fully to repreſent the Nature and Glory of this Myſtery.

I ſuppoſe then this Bleſſed and Eternal Spirit, whether by the Subſtantial and Exulting Joy between the Father and the Son; or from what other Bleſſed Exuberancy and Conſtraint, Plenitude and Perfection of their Glorious Natures I define not, to have Iſſued or Proceeded jointly from them both, in like manner, from all Eternity. For though there be neceſſarily an Order of Nature, and Priority of Conception, with reſpect to theſe Three Infinite Hypoſtaſes; yet otherwiſe (ſuch is the Priviledge and Incomprehenſibility of an Infinite and Eternal Being) are they all from Everlaſting, Coeternal together and Coequal. *The Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghoſt God; and yet not Three Gods, but One God. The Father Subſtance, the Son Subſtance, and the Holy Ghoſt Subſtance; and yet not Three ſeparate or divided Subſtances, but One join'd and united Subſtance:* As not Three ſeparate or divided Gods, but One joint, Glorious, and united God. The abſolute Fulneſs, Unity, and Perfection of the Entire God-head being compleated in theſe Three.

This is a ſhort Scheme of *the Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity*, which *is to be Worſhipped*; ſo far as my own Private Apprehenſion, yet after the Example of ſome very Great Perſons, can dive into it. And I think it is thus ſufficiently intelligible, ſo far as concerns Reaſon, our Divine Joy, Adoration and Faith. Nor can I tell otherwiſe what to make of this Admirable Myſtery, after all that I have read or heard about it. Though ſtill in ſo profound and abſtruſe a Point, I think it but decent and our Duty, to ſubmit what we ſay, by way of particular Explication, to the Wiſdom and Authority of the Church.

But where is the Impiety, Contradictiouſneſs, or Abſurdity of this Doctrine? It makes, you will ſay, Three Gods; which is an invincible Load and Prejudice upon it. That I utterly deny, and hope to make the contrary farther to appear, ſo far as is conſiſtent with a Trinity of Perſons: And that you will ſay again is very ſufficient, and the Truth.

How ſhould this Doctrine come to have any thing of peculiar Myſtery in it, or be thought to be ſuch a Difficulty, if it was not for the Trinity contain'd in it? Now This Trinity we all own, and ſacredly aſſert; and that it is to be preſerv'd as inviolate as the Unity: So that we muſt neither *confound* the one, nor *divide* the other. Which ſeems effectually done in the Hypotheſis I have choſen. Here are three Evident and Diſtinct Perſons, ſuch as they ought to be, and yet in one *undivided Eſſence or Subſtance*; the very Catholick Faith ſo much pleaded for, and Aſſerted. Each indeed hath a Subſtance, as every real Perſonality, ſubſiſting Being or Perſon ought to have; and yet there is that Union and Undividedneſs of Subſtances,

ſtances, that Order, * Dependance, and eſſential Tye and Unity among them, from their very Nature and Being, as effectually preſerves both Unity and Trinity: And if they are as much One as is reaſonable or deſirable, or conſiſtent in reality with Three ſo proper, ſo different, and diſtinct Perſons, as Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, are made and acknowledged to be, I know not what we ſhould ſeek or expect further.

The ſubſtance of all is not only *Homoiouſios*, but *Homoouſios*; not only of a *like*, but of the *ſame undivided* Eſſence or Subſtance; foraſmuch as it is the one, or tri-une Subſtance, and indiſcerpible Eſſence of the entire God-head. There is a perfect Union, but not a ſingularity in the whole; as none, I think, can make ſuch a thing in *their* ſenſe, and in a Trinity of Perſons, and yet talk intelligibly; and ſo as in all other Matters is ſuitable to the Notions and Natures of Things, and to the Reaſons and Faculties of Men; which, in my Apprehenſion, is a mighty prejudice to this ſo ſtrict and ſtark Method of holding it. Nor can I ſee any real and proper Uſe or Benefit of it; it ſeems to be all anſwer'd as well the way which ſome others take, as by this abſolute Oneneſs and Singularity of Subſtance; a thing the hardeſt to conceive in a real Trinity of Perſons of any thing in the World, and needleſs, I think, to be aſſerted in it.

Beſides, I would willingly know from whence it is, that we muſt ſo peremptorily conclude, in this ſenſe,

 that

* By Dependance *I mean only the* Subordination *in the Deity; and That the Son hath his Being from the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt from the Father and the Son; yet in ſuch a manner as to make up* One *entire Eſſence and God-head.*

that there is but One Subſtance though Three Perſons. Where is this delivered in the Holy Scripture? And from thence it is, that we hold the Doctrine of the Sacred Trinity. As to meer Reaſon, it informs us no more of Three Perſons in the Holy God-head, than of Three Subſtances; nay, it evidently ſeems to make the latter, though ſtill United, as neceſſary as the former. If the Unity of the Deity can conſiſt with Three Perſons, why not as well with Three Subſtances, in the ſenſe it hath been explained? Or, what doth the Scripture ſpeak more of the one than of the other, as to any excluſion of the latter? If we think it makes Three Gods, ſo would Three *Perſons*, we ſhould have thought, had they been aſſerted without the Warrant of Revelation. Had this indeed plainly made any Difference, there would have been good reaſon, in ſo Incomprehenſible a Subject, to have ſubmitted; but ſince it hath not, the ſame Incomprehenſibleneſs of the Subject, and of the Myſtery, makes it the more Groundleſs, and the more Raſh, to aſſert an *abſolute Oneneſs and Singularity of Subſtance*: When no mortal Man can know, but that this is the very Nature and Perfection of the God-head, to be Three Subſtances yet One Subſtance, Three Perſons yet One God; ſo as before hath been repreſented: And as the Scripture hath not, ſo neither hath the fierceſt Anti-Trinitarian any thing, that I know, conſiderable to the contrary. I could wiſh that Prejudice might be laid aſide, and the Thing at leaſt coolly and fairly conſider'd.

There are many things, and particularly in the Deity, abundantly above our Comprehenſion; but then they only ſeem vaſtly too big for our Graſp, but offer

offer not any Force or Violence otherwiſe to our Unſtandings; Nay, our Reaſon leads us in a natural way to them; and we diſcern them notwithſtanding to be neceſſary and unavoidable; as the Wiſdom, Eternity, and Self-Exiſtence of ſomething or other; and ſo its Power and Immenſity: And we are moſt naturally caſt, and, I think I may repeat it, neceſſarily and unavoidably, I am ſure glorioufly and deſirably, on that Infinite Being we call God; the moſt Bleſſed Author and Original of all Things.

But now this abſolute Singularity, and *Numericalneſs* of Subſtance, pleaded for by ſome, and yet with as abſolute a Diſtinction and *Plurality* of Perſons contain'd in it, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; the Second generated from the Firſt, and the Third as everlaſtingly proceeding from both: This is not only above, but ſhocks the Reaſon and Underſtanding of Man with ſomething altogether unconceivable and unintelligible; a ſeeming Impropriety and Inconſiſtency is involved in it, contrary, as it ſhould ſeem, to all other *Perſons*, and to the diſtinct Nature and Characters of theſe.

Let us conceive, for Inſtance, of God the Father as in himſelf, and according to the Priority of his Nature: Certainly in his own Being, and without the Son, ſo far as we can diſtinguiſh them, he had an Infinite Subſtance or Eſſence of his own. On the Generation of the Son, I would demand with Reverence what was Generated? A real Son, a real Divine Perſon, all will grant. But is here then no Alteration, no Diſtinction from the Eſſence or Subſtance of the Father? and yet a new perſonal Being, or diſtinct ſubſiſting Perſonality, a real Infinite Son Generated and

Begotten

Begotten. The like is eaſily applied to the Production or Proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt. That Bleſſed Spirit is a real Perſonal ſubſiſting Spirit, diſtinct from the Father and the Son; and ſo ſhould have, one would think, ſome diſtinct *Subſtratum*, or Ground, as I may ſo ſpeak, for its Perſonality.

It is of the Nature of that which Iſſues, proceeds, or is any way Generated from another, to be diſtinct from that from which it iſſues; and to be real Eſſence or Subſtance, unleſs it be only Quality or Accident: But no one will ſay, That the Son and Spirit are only Modes, Properties, Qualities or Accidents: Wherefore it remains that they are real Subſtance; and that, in a due ſenſe, diſtinct as from the Father, ſo from one another. And what elſe indeed ſhould an Infinite Son, having all Divine Attributes in himſelf; and to whom the very Creation of the World is attributed in Holy Scripture; a Son diſtinct from the Father, and Generated, as we ſpeak, of him from all Eternity; I ſay, what ſhould ſuch a Glorious and Perfect Being as this be, but Subſtance from Subſtance? Or how ſhould he not have a true, proper, yet undivided Eſſence of his own?

They have diſtinct Properties, Perceptions, and Perſonalities of their own: What reaſon can be given, that they ſhould not have proper, yet eſſentially undivided Subſtances too? And as to the Divine Unity, I am clearly of the mind of the moſt Reverend Dr. *More*; who hath well obſerv'd, that not dry, and meagre Speculation, but the real *Harmony* and *Perfection* of the Deity is the meaſure of the Divine Attributes, and of the *Unity* of the Godhead. See his *Firſt Vol. Philoſoph. p.* 332. And there is nothing to be

be admitted on one hand or t'other that doth any way Croſs or Infringe theſe. And if there is not ſuch a Tri-unity as this in *Subſtance*, as well as otherwiſe in the Deity, 'tis hard, I think, to give account of the Divine, Infinite Properties, and diſtinct Attributes of each Perſon; which ſure do require not only perſonality, but a Foundation for that diſtinct Perſonality at the Bottom.

And in ſuitableneſs unto this we find in Scripture, that the Son is call'd *the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon*; that he is ſaid to be in the *Form of God*, *the only-begotten Son of God*, *the Image of the Inviſible God*; and the like. See alſo *Wiſd.* 7. 25, 26. All which do naturally import what I drive at; not an Airy, and I know not what Notional and Metaphyſical, but a real, diſtinct, and ſubſtantial Son; *the expreſs Image of his Perſon* in Eſſence and Subſtance, as well as Wiſdom and Attributes; *God of God*, *Light of Light*, *very God of very God*; being yet notwithſtanding *of One Subſtance with the Father*, by a Vital Eſſential Union of Subſtances.

And ſo the like in Analogy is to be ſaid in the Caſe of the Bleſſed Spirit; A real and ſubſtantial Spirit proceeded; an Omnipotent, Omnipreſent, and All-knowing Spirit: And what ſhould this be but Eſſential and Subſtantial? Yet altogether undivided from the Subſtance or Eſſence of both Father and Son: So that they are intimately, abſolutely, and ſubſtantially One; Three Perſons, whereof each is God, and yet at the ſame time by means of their Union, Coexiſtency, and Inexiſtency in one another, in a proper ſenſe *One* All-Glorious and Undivided God. There is as

great

great a Unity as is consistent with a Trinity; and, I will add again, as is useful or desirable, and as distinct a Trinity as is consistent with Unity; and this I look upon as a fair and intelligible account of both.

And they are further One, the true and infinite Divinity or entire God-head, not only by Vertue of this meer essential and substantial Union, (as Three Angelick Spirits substantially United may be One and Three); but as there is that *necessary* Order, and Dependance, as I said, in the Divine Persons; as the Father is the Root and Fountain of the Deity, and is not perfect, as I may so speak with Reverence, without the Son; but by the blessed Fulness and Necessity of his Nature, begets that Eternal Word or Wisdom, the Image of himself both Nature and Essence. And so the Holy, Eternal and Ever-blessed Spirit, that of Infinite Joy and Divine Love, doth as necessarily proceed from Father and Son; and compleats, as I may express it, the Glory, Fulness, and Perfection of the Deity. And thus are they One, to use an improper Expression, Root and Branch, by Order and Dependance, Necessarily, Essentially, and Eternally. And to this Blessed and Ever-adorable Triad be Honour and Glory, Dominion and Obedience, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

I have now run over the main of what I had to say with the greatest Brevity on this Subject; but do entirely, as I ought, and think my self obliged in such Matters, submit what I have said to the Judgment and Authority of our Rulers; who will discern, I hope, so much at least (if they were to know it) in what hath been advanced, as not to think me Guilty of any Wilfull and Heretical Pravity or Design.

I am ſatisfied by what I have read and ſeen, that the Antient Fathers afford Ground for different Ways of Holding and Receiving of this Myſtery, and for Controverſies in it; in many Paſſages aſſerting ſuch a Reality of ſubſtantial Perſons as I now drive at; and in others pleading for ſuch an Oneneſs (at leaſt ſeemingly) and Numericalneſs of Subſtance as others do imbrace, and contend for. It is indeed in ſome, and that a proper Senſe, *One* and *Numerical*; becauſe no Part of the Deity, or Subſtance of the Perſons contain'd in it, is any way divided but united throughout; and ſo is Plural in one Senſe, and Numerical in another at the ſame time; as in other reſpects it is acknowledged to be Three and yet One: Three Perſons and One God: And the very Subſtance of the Divinity is Singular and One ſo far as the Holy Trinity can admit of it.

And this Hypotheſis I propoſe will be found, if conſider'd, excellently well to anſwer the Difficulties and Expreſſions of various Perſons, and even Parties in this great Myſtery.

Firſt according to *Athanaſius*, "Here is a Conjunction without Confuſion, and a Diſtinction without "Diviſion: And in ſhort, an Indiviſible Unity of the "*Entire Godhead*, or Divine Nature. According to *Gregory Nyſſen*, "Here is Number and no Number, different "View *(or Variety)* and yet but One; a Diſtinction of "Hypoſtaſes, and yet no Diviſion in the Subjects. According to *Hilary*, "Here the Perſon of the Son remains diſtinct from the Perſon of the Father; and "hath a Legitimate and Proper Subſtance of his own "begotten Nature from God the Father, and yet is "not of a *divided Subſtance from him*. "Here, according

cording to St. *Auguſtin*, " the Father, Son, and Holy " Ghoſt are One in the ſame Individual Nature, *or* " *undivided Eſſence*, and are One God, *Propter ineffa-* " *bilem Conjunctionem Deitatis*, by an ineffable Union " and Conjunction in the Deity: And again, *Propter* " *Individuam Deitatem*, becauſe of one Individual and " Indiviſible Deity.

Here again is what the *Socinians* ſtick at, and think impoſſible; " One and Three; neither Confuſion of " Perſons, nor Diviſion of the Subſtance: They are Three and diſtinct, but not divided Perſons or Subſtances; they are in one and the ſame Undivided Eſſence or *Subſtance*, and ſo without Diviſion or Separation. " And here is the Communication of the " ſame *undivided* Subſtance unto Three real but not " *divided* Perſons; ſo as that each Perſon may have " his own Proper Subſtance, and yet the *entire* Divine " Eſſence be in it ſelf undivided.

" Here is *Cyprian's Plena & adunata Trinitas*, his " compleat United and Undivided Trinity. And further, according to *Tertullian*, " Here is, as he ſpeaks, " a Prolation of the Word without Separation; and " the Word both the Son of God, and alſo God *ex* " *Unitate Subſtantiæ*, from an eſſential Unity and " Conjunction of Subſtance. Here is alſo his *Una* " *Subſtantia in tribus Cohærentibus*; his *Probola Verita-* " *tis, Cuſtos Unitatis*; with many others needleſs to be mentioned.

Here is the Proper *Medium* between the Extreams ſpoken of by *Dyoniſius* of *Rome*, *viz.* " Of Three " ſeparate and independent Principles, or elſe the " Confuſion of the Divine Perſons in the one *Sabel-* " *lian* Principle: And theſe two are the great Errors and

and Extreams which the Fathers, when they explain themſelves, ſeem chiefly to have guarded the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity againſt. " Here are *Plato*'s " Three Principles, that both he and his Followers " ſpeak ſo much of; and which he hath been juſt- " ly thought by ſeveral of the Antients to have drawn " from *Moſes*, and from the *Hebrew* Doctrine in *E-* " *gypt*; his Divine Eſſence inlarging it ſelf to Three " Hypoſtaſes; and ſuch as have been acknowledged " by both *Egyptians* and *Perſians*. And for a Proof in general of the Diſtinct Subſtantiality of Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, and yet Unity of the Divine Eſſence or Subſtance, ſee the Learned Dr. *More* in that Volume of his before-mentioned, *P.* 770, *&c.*

And now here, again, according to a late Writer, is that Expreſſion Verified, " That each of the " Divine Perſons hath an abſolute Nature diſtinctly *(but not dividedly)* " belonging to him: And again, " That the Father is, and ſubſiſts as a Father, by ha- " ving a Son, and communicating his Eſſence to ano- " ther. And elſewhere, That the Relation between " the Father and Son is founded on that Eternal Act " by which the Father communicates his Divine Na- " ture *(or Eſſence, for here they are the ſame)* to the " Son. And he ſpeaks again of Three mentioned in " Scripture, to whom diſtinctly the Godhead doth be- " long: And in another place, " That in the Divine " Perſons of the Trinity, the Divine Nature and the " Perſonal Subſiſtence *Coaleſce* into One, by an Incom- " prehenſible, ineffable kind of Union and Conjunction. Which very laſt words imply different Beings and Subſiſtences, but admirably and incomprehenſibly United in the Godhead.

Here is alſo the Myſtery and the Difficulty unriddled, after a due ſort and ſenſe, " Of Three individual " Eſſences, and yet but One *entire*, *divine*, and indi- " vidual Eſſence. And further, How the ſame Subſtance " doth both Unite and Diſtinguiſh the Divine Sub- " ſtances or Subſiſtences at the ſame time. Nor is there any thing, it is hoped, in all this ſaid, but what is ſufficiently ſuitable to the *Divine Nature*, Properties and Perfections; and what it is not only capable of, but ſeems neceſſary to be in it, under this Plurality of Perſons, and Myſterious Triunity it doth conſiſt of

But to proceed, and come to a Concluſion; here " again the Divinity is whole, entire, indiviſible, and " indiſcerpible in all Three: And it is not hard to conceive in this Hypotheſis how theſe may be Three *Peculiar* Subſtances in One entire and indiviſible Subſtance; and Three Eſſences comprehended in One individual Divine Eſſence; foraſmuch as the Three Perſons or Subſiſtences make but One individual Deity or Godhead. " And thus further the Unity of the " Godhead is the moſt Real, Eſſential, Indiviſible, " and Inſeparable Unity: And the Divine Nature O- " riginally in the Father is ſubſtantially communica- " ted by the Father to the Son, as a diſtinct ſubſiſting " Perſon, by an eternal ineffable Generation; and to " the Holy Ghoſt by an eternal and ſubſtantial Pro- " ceſſion from Father and Son: As theſe are allowed to be True and Orthodox Expreſſions.

Let it now be duly conſider'd how well ſuch Paſſages and Expreſſions as theſe, with numerous others, are anſwer'd by the Account which hath been here given of the Holy Trinity; and if they be not in the way which is here taken, conceivable and intelligible; but whether

whether they be the ſame in any other; and yet this ſtill remains a ſufficiently great and incomprehenſible Myſtery.

The Unity of the Divine Eſſence is much inſiſted on in this Controverſy; and certainly very deſervedly; Nor is it in the leaſt to be deſtroy'd or denied: But if there be ſuch an abſolute Unity and Simplicity in the Godhead as is contended for by many, how comes there to be ſuch a marvellous, and peculiar Trinity of Perſons in it? Such a *Prolation* of Subſtance, or Communication of Eſſence from Father to Son, and from both again of theſe to the Holy Spirit. A Demonſtration this is, that we muſt not be too ſtrait-lac'd in determining the Nature of the Divine Unity: Nor are we to be Nice beyond Scripture or the Reaſon of things. And as the Plurality of Perſons in the Deity is extraordinary, ſo what if they be look'd upon as as an extraordinary ſort alſo of *undivided Individuals*; becauſe, though they thus multiply the Perſons, yet they neither Divide nor Multiply the Godhead; and the Caſe here is infinitely different from that of *Common Individuals dividing the Species* in other things. We grant that there is nothing to be offer'd from any Intrenching on the Divine Perfection; but the Queſtion ſtill is, What that Perfection is, and what it doth require, or will admit of.

And I cannot but here particularly obſerve, that ſeveral of the Antient Fathers of the Church expreſſed themſelves ſo very largely on this Subject, that exceeding Learned Men have thought that they aſſerted, at leaſt in ſome Places, only a *Specifick Unity* in the Godhead. How abſolutely true this is, it is not for me to determine; but it is obvious to Remark, that they

they doing this even after the *Nicene* Council, it is a ſign that they held the Diſtinction of Perſons and Subſiſtences with a Witneſs; and we may alſo from hence gather the Obſcurity and Ambiguity of thoſe Antient Writers on this Subject: For if ſuch Perſons as *Curcellæus*, *Petavius*, Dr. *Cudworth*, and the like, after all their Reading and Search, could not yet underſtand thoſe Fathers aright, what hope ſhould there be for others of an ordinary Size and Mediocrity to do it? It ſhould only methinks make all Perſons ſo much the more Candid, Moderate and Ingenuous in this Controverſy; where the Doctrine, I mean, in General, both Unity and Trinity, is ſincerely believed, pleaded for and aſſerted. Which very thing hath been lately attempted, and that with admirable Candour and Freedom of Mind, by a certain great Perſon, to whom, for his Supereminent Learning and Abilities, and great Services to the Church of God, the World pays particular and ſingular Reſpects: And who whatever way he adheres to himſelf, yet he is not preſently for the loading of every one with Hereſy and Reproach that Concurrs not with him exactly in this Adorable Myſtery.

Let me only hint now, from the whole that hath been obſerv'd, That if either any Antient or Preſent Writers ſhall ſeem therefore ſometimes to ſay things neither ſo clear in themſelves, nor ſo conſiſtent poſſibly with what they ſhall appear to aſſert at others, this will be allowed perhaps to be no new, nor impoſſible thing; and may well proceed from the great Difficulties and Intricacies of the Subject, on ſome ſide or other, if not duly and warily manag'd; and will confirm all along, but no way weaken the preſent Hypo-

Hypotheſis; as the beſt middle between the various Extreams, and particularly either *Arianiſm*, *Tritheiſm*, or *Sabellianiſm*.

I have nothing to add further, but that every one holding the Main Article, *Three Perſons in one undivided Eſſence or Subſtance*, muſt do it as conſiſtently, and after the beſt way and manner he is able; though I cannot but think the Method follow'd by ſome to be much more plain and intelligible than that of others; and conſequently of ſo much the greater Service againſt our ſo eager and violent Oppoſers. And yet in theſe Caſes, conſidering the Depth of the Matter, and the various Turn of Mens particular Thoughts, however they may expreſs themſelves with Freedom, yet certainly it ought to be with all due *Decorum*, Reverence and Reſpect, with Regard to our Superiors, the Nature of the Subject, and the Senſe of others. Which are Rules that I would not deſignedly be thought to Tranſgreſs.

And now I wiſh that what hath been here ſaid, might Reconcile, if poſſible, both *Antients* and *Moderns* in their Accounts of the Holy Trinity, and make them better to meet and agree together; as ſome have endeavoured, and Dr. *More* in particular, the Reconciling by this means the Orthodox of old and the *Semi-Arians*. For the Latter acknowledg'd the Son to be of *a like* but not of the *ſame* Subſtance with the Father; taking it ſo Numerically as ſome now do; for they thought that a ſort of an Inconſiſtency or Contradiction. But if we will allow both a *Likeneſs* of Subſtance in the Son to that of the Father, as alſo a *Sameneſs* as they are unitedly One, and not ſeparated or divided from one another, both ſides on this, if they had

had ſo pleas'd, and could have thought good, might have been agreed. *See that Excellent Perſon in his* Paralipomena Prophetica, *Chap.* 40. *P.* 344. *

* *Where are now thoſe* Arians *which deny Chriſt to have been Perfect* God, *of* Equal *Subſtance with the Father?* Book of Homilies, Sermon on the Nativity, p. 172.

And now for the Generation and Proceſſion of Two ſuch Infinite Perſons, as Son and Holy Ghoſt in the Bleſſed Trinity, it is a high Myſtery indeed; but involves in it nothing of Inconſiſtency, or Violence to the Faculties of Men at all. For here is no effect but what there is a ſufficient Cauſe for; If the Son be Infinite, there is an Infinite Father ſufficient to be the Ground and Fountain of his Being: And if the Holy Ghoſt be Infinite and Eternal, there is an Infinite and Eternal Father and Son for it to proceed from. There is much leſs Difficulty in the conceiving of this, than the Creation of all things out of nothing. And as the Deity is every way Inſcrutable and Incomprehenſible, ſo this Glorious Fecundity, and Plurality of Perſons, ſeems apparently to make for the Increaſe of the Bleſſedneſs and Perfection of it.

I have now, *Sir*, given you my Thoughts of this great Myſtery; and let the Hypotheſis be allow'd, I know of no Difficulties in *Reaſon* or *Scripture*, but what are eaſily enough ſolved by it. And it is needleſs to enter further upon them. I leave the whole to your own Scrutiny, and ſtricteſt Examination; and begging Pardon for this Trouble, Subſcribe now, Dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

POST.

POSTSCRIPT.

I Shall now ſend you ſome *Excerptions* out of a Letter from a Friend of mine, relating to the main Argument; and particularly illuſtrating the Perfective Nature of the Trinitarian Doctrine with reſpect to the Deity, as alſo its practical Uſefulneſs with reſpect to the Joy and Happineſs of the Creature; and ſuch as, I believe, are very agreeable to your own Sentiments in this Matter. Thus then that Reverend Perſon Writes, amongſt ſeveral other things, in the Letter mention'd.

'The Society in the Deity, both in it ſelf, and according to the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, is to me (let ſome flout it as they pleaſe) 'a Demonſtration of 'the greater Perfection and Happineſs of the Father; 'who though alone he would be wonderfully Happy 'and Perfect, in reflecting on and loving his own Soli-'tary and Numerical ſelf, yet if with this he hath the 'Infinite Wiſdom and Love, the Son and Holy Ghoſt, 'to Joy in; this is ſtill more, and a great *more* too, to 'enjoy. And if any ſort of Content, Happineſs or En-'joyment, accrues unto the Father by the Creation, as 'in a due ſenſe we muſt think there doth, how much 'more is added to him by two ſuch Perſons as are Infi-'nite in Perfection; and each of them infinitely better 'than all Creatures put together! Both of them can 'underſtand, and can fully rejoice in the Riches and 'Treaſures of the Father's Nature, and their own, and 'he in his own and theirs: We come infinitely ſhort in 'our Knowledge and Congratulations of him: So

'that God the Father is with his Creatures, as a Man 'may be said to be with Birds and Beasts; which is 'some, but a very imperfect Converse to us; but now 'they Three are to one another as Men to Men, which 'makes up the Harmony and Sweetness of Society.

Again, how much happier is the Creation by the Existence of these Three Persons in the Deity, than if only One did Exist! I do not mean they are so, as if One Infinite were not enough to Create and Govern them; but this is evident, That we being bound to Love God above all, and that Love being the most perfecting Act of our Souls, as to our Happiness, if we have Three Infinite Persons in One Undivided Essence, our Happiness and our Joy must be wonderfully increas'd beyond that which it would otherwise be. Nay by this way the Father appearing so much Greater and Perfecter to us, our Love to him will be the greater: And if from his own Fulness in himself, supposing he were but One Person, we can, and do Admire, Love, and Rejoice in him, as the Father of the Whole Family, in Heaven and Earth, upon the supposition of the Trinity we may distinctly and sensibly Love and Admire the Father, as the Root and Fountain of those two Infinite Emanations from him, the Son and Spirit: And what an Augmentation of Happiness is this, both in the Deity and the Creation! 'Tis unexpressibly desirable that it should be so, if it be possible; and the Doctrine of the Trinity highly recommended on this account.

Again, this Doctrine is not a fanciful but real Argument a *Majori*, not to Sin; seeing Three such Persons, Authorities, Wills, Commands, and Glories are violated. The newness of the Thought, in any thing

of

of this, ought not to be a Prejudice againſt the ſolid Reality of it. As to the ſtop of Three Perſons in the Deity, what can be more reaſonable than what Dr. *More* offers; *viz.* That by the ſame Reaſon that you would aſſert a *Fourth* Perſon, you may aſſert an Infinity, which abhors from the natural Notion of the Unity of God. He particularly ſhews *why there ſhould be Three, and no more but Three real Hypoſtaſes or Perſons in the One Divine Subſtance or Eſſence.* See Paralip. Prophet. Ch. 50. P. 469.

I have often thought on theſe things, but I write my Thoughts curſorily without any accuracy of Words or Matter, &c. *And afterwards,* Upon the Score of probable Reaſon to me, the *Dogma* of the Holy Trinity hath ten times the advantage, nay more, of the Unitarian Doctrin. And then, Holy *Jews*, (not the Modern, but Antient) Philoſophers, Fathers, Councils, and *Scripture* adding their Suffrage, 'tis an high Object of Faith. *He is of Opinion, in ſhort,* that 'one Eſſence comprehending three Eſſences is to be 'acknowledged. And concludes, The *Socinians*, me-'thinks, ſeem dry, contentious, and wrangling in their 'Managements; The *Platoniſts* expreſs a Veneration, 'and Divine pure flame of Love in what they do, *&c.* And ſo much for the pious and worthy Writer of this Letter, and the Excerptions from him.

I ſhall end all with ſome paſſages fetched from the Prefaces before Dr. *More's* Poems, and which though Written when he was very Young, yet as every thing elſe of that great Perſon, will deſerve the ſerious Conſideration and Approbation of Perſons of all Ages in this Admirable Myſtery. Thus then he Writes in his Preface *General* to thoſe Poems, *P.* 3, 4.

'Contemplations concerning the Dry Eſſence of the 'Deity are very Conſuming and Unſatisfactory. 'Tis 'better to Drink of the Blood of the Grape, than bite 'the Root of the Vine; to ſmell of the Roſe, than 'chew the Stalk. And, bleſſed be God, the meaneſt of 'Men are capable of the former, very few ſucceſsful in 'the latter. And the leſs, becauſe the Reports of them 'that have buſi'd themſelvs that way, have not only ſeem-'ed ſtrange to to the Vulgar, but even repugnant with 'one another. But I ſhould in Charity refer this to the 'nature of the Pidgeons Neck rather than to miſtake 'or contradiction. One and the ſame Object in Nature 'affords many different *Phænomena*; and God is as 'infinitely Various as ſimple. Wherefore it is more 'ſafe to admit all poſſible Perfections in God than 'raſhly to deny what appears not to us in our particu-'lar Poſture. And afterwards in his *particular* Preface to the firſt Canto of *Pſychozoia*, P. 6, 7.

But the beſt is, that the happineſs of Man is not the Eſſence but the Influence of the Divinity; and to be Baptiſed in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, (ſo he means, as himſelf hath deſcribed in that Preface) of more Conſequence than to Read and Underſtand all the curious and acute School-Tracts of the Trinity. For this may be permited to the Devil: That is the Priviledge only of the Good and Pious Man. Nor is it any wonder at all.

For be it ſo, that the Contemplation of theſe things is very Sublime and Subtil; yet well I wot they are nothing Satisfactory to the Soul. For the exile Theories, of the Infinity of God and Trinity, are but as it were the dry meaſuring and numbring of the Deity; and profit as much to the Soul devoid of Charity, as the Di-

Diameter of the Sun's Body, or the remembrance of that Trinal Property in *lux*, *lumen*, and *calefaction*, can warm a Man in a cold frosty Night.

But if any Man would be sufficiently initiated into these Mysteries, he must repair to the ever living word of God, that subtle and searching Fire, that will sift all the Vanities of dreaming Philosophers, and burn up the vain Imaginations of false Christians like Stubble.

'All this out of a tenderness of Mind, being exceeding loth to give any Man Offence by my Writings: For though Knowledge and Theory be better than any thing but Honesty and true Piety, yet it is not so good as that I should willingly offend my Neighbour by it. And I very heartily Concurr with this extraordinary Person in these his Candid and Pious Expressions.

FINIS.

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